

# The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **I** Nto what Place does the Soul of Man go immediately after its departure out of the Body, seeing it does not go into its full fruition of Happiness or Misery?

Ans. We are mistaken if this Question has not been before partly answer'd, and here once for all, we desire Gentlemen before they send any Queries hither, that they'd be at the pains to consult our *Indexes*, and see whether they are not already answer'd, whereby they'd oftentimes save themselves and us some trouble, and not take it ill that we don't *actum agere*. — To this we answer in short that the *Souls* of *Ill-Men*, who by the by are very *Catachrestically* said to enjoy *Misery* are in the power of the *Devils*, who when they die, are said to require their *Souls* of 'em; and where those *Devils* are has been above discuss'd and clear'd, not out of *Fancy* but evident *Scriptures*: As for the *Souls* of *Good men*, they are immediately after their separation in very good *Company*, in the care of those *Angels* who carry 'em into *Paradise*, or *Abraham's Bosom*. But where or what that is we'll not now discuss, not being willing at present to venture on any more *Paradoxes*.

Quest. 2. Whether there is a Cessation of Mens Torments and Happiness at the Day of Judgment till both their Sentences are pronounced by God?

Ans. The Question seems to suppose the wicked to be actually in a local *Hell* before the Day of Judgment as well as the *Godly* in *Heaven*, both which, perhaps, are more commonly & easily said than made good. We believe the greatest Torments of wicked Men before the Day of Judgment, and those bad enough, will be their own *Consciences*, and that *Company* they are condemn'd to: Which Torments will be both augmented instead of their ceasing, at the Day of Judgment, the first by having all their Faults again represented both to them and all the World, the second by being Eternally confined by an irreverfible doom to those *Infernal Prisons* prepared for the Devil and his *Angels*— And for the contrary Reasons the Joy of the *Saints* must needs be at the same time highly augmented.

Quest. 3. Whether it were lawful for Lot's two Daughters to go into their Father?

Ans. This Question wou'd seem almost ridiculous, had not Learned Men observ'd that the Jews go about to excuse 'em in this matter — by pleading for 'em that they thought all the World besides was destroy'd, from their Expression — "There is not a Man on Earth to come in unto us— and besides that they expected to be the Mothers of the *Messias*— both which we think very frivolous excuses. For the last, we que-

stion whether there were then any such expectation. at least but a very implicate one: For the first, they must have been silly indeed to think there were no Men in the World besides those of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*— for both neither wou'd be an available excuse, but both of 'em guilty of the highest and most abominable Incest.

Quest. 4. Whether in your Opinion are the best Christians, they that live precise and circumspect in all outward appearance, boasting of Holiness of Life, and of their great Knowledge of Jesus Christ, and have great confidence of their Election and Predestination, but in their Dealings in the World are Subtle and Crafty, Gripping and Over-reaching all they deal with; and in their Behaviour Hasty and Morose, easily mov'd and hard to be pacified; or they that live more loose in the World, freer to keep Company, and sometimes may take Gods Name in vain, yet of a downright plain way of dealing, cautious of defrauding any, and honest in all their Morals, serving God to the best of their frail Abilities, not presuming on their own good Works, but hoping the best through the Merits of Christ?

Ans. A fair division of the World, and we doubt an over-true one. into *Pharisees* and *Sadduces*— but our Saviour was neither. For the former sort, undoubtedly Pride is the very darling Sin of the Devil, and we believe he's more sure of a proud censorious Man, who is guilty of Spiritual Sins, than of the loudest Rake hell in the World, for the latter has seldom so entirely rooted out the Principles of Conscience and Reason, but that he sometimes thinks he ought to do better, and therefore there's even some probability of his Repentance, whereas the other is shut up from all hopes of Reformation and Amendment while he thinks he's already so good 'tis impossible he shou'd be better. The Principle of the one is, "To love God and hate his Neighbour, of the other "to love God without keeping his Commandments, in both which they are damnably mistaken; for they must either take Religion all together or else let it all alone. The mischief is that both sides instead of looking at home, make it their business to find faults abroad, and rather rail at others than mend themselves, for o' t'other side that Man must not pretend to be a Christian, nay not as far advanced as a Moral Heathen, who makes nothing of the Religion of an Oath, nor spares to abuse that Great and Holy Name by which he is call'd in taking it to witness in every mean silly frivolous matter, nor must he deceive himself and think a Christian Faith and Heathen Life will save him meerly for saying *Lord have mercy upon me*, or the French King who after he had sworn



sworn tised to beg pardon of his Wooden God. Nor is it *Morality*, but *Christianity*, must save us, else there had been no need of our *Saviours* coming upon the Earth, nor can one so much as pretend to *Morality* it self who lives in the constant breach of two Branches of it, the third Command, the sixth, nay seventh, eighth, ninth and all, by rash vain Oaths and Intemperate Living. In a word, we wish they'd once reform themselves, and let one another alone, since they are e'ne so bad that we know not which is the better, but pray God to mend 'em both, which we think they have so much need of.

We having received a very remarkable Letter relating to the desired Reformation, wherein are matters of very great concern to the publick, think fit to publish it for the most part in the same words we receiv'd it, as well as the Questions following. The Letter bears this Sence.

S I R,

One who has the Character of a Religious Person is suspected by his Neighbours to be concerned in the Business of the Reformation, and thereupon represented by his Enemies as an ill Man, and a base hypocritical Fellow, and others who are willing to entertain a more favourable Opinion of him, say they'll not believe it that being a good Man, as they charitably suppose him, he'd be guilty of any thing of that Nature. — Others say — they wonder Mr. — who lives well and in good repute, shou'd undertake such a thing, there being Rogues enough to make Informers of, &c. And this is not the Discourse of meaner Persons only, but even of Parish Officers, and such as are sworn to put the Laws in Execution against Vice: Others represent him as a Busie-body, saying 'tis the business of Officers, and not private Persons. — On the whole pray answer the following Questions relating to this Matter.

Quest. 5. Whether the being an Informer against Vice be consonant with a Christian Profession?

Quest. 6. Whether such an Informer may justly be call'd a Busie-body, since he does no more than his Duty?

Ans. For a Reply to both these we refer the Reader to our large Paper formerly published concerning this Reformation — and so go on to those that follow.

Quest. 7. That the World may be satisfied that pecuniary profit is not the cause of such Informations, I desire you'd tell us what Benefit those Persons get who inform against profane Swearing, Cursing, Drunkenness, &c.

Ans. This is already done very plainly in a broad sheet of Paper, sometimes since published for that purpose. But an Infalible way not to be thought Mercenary in this case, is to refuse that share in the Mule which the Law allows, and let it be given to the Poor, and then malice it self can't charge it upon you.

Quest. 8. What that Person may expect who having been punished for profane Swearing does endeavour as much as he can to ruin that Person he suspects to be the cause of his Punishment, and threatens to squeeze his Soul from his Body?

Ans. 'Tis no great wonder that one who deals so ill with God himself, shou'd have so little respect for Men, nay for the Magistrate, who bears the Sword to punish Vice: Nor is it any great wonder, when all manner of Vice has been so long Rampant, the Devil should be so unwilling to leave those Wretches whom he has so long possess'd, nor is't to be thought he'll e're do it without rearing 'em and making 'em some at the Mouth for a Farewel. For this Wretch who is so far from being amended by wholesome Punishments that he's only the worse for't, it's a sign he wants a great deal more than he has yet had, and deserves to be made as Exemplary in punishment as his Fault has been. In order to which we desire his Name and Habitation may be sent hither, which if 'tis done, perhaps he may find there are greater Persons will appear against him than he expects, in the Cause of Vertue and Religion.

Quest. 9. What must those Parish Officers expect, who being Sworn to perform their Duties do notwithstanding return the Money levy'd upon Offenders against the late Order of Sessions, to the Persons offending, whereas it ought to be given to the Poor?

Ans. 'Tis pity but they shou'd be better known, and then they might expect something like their Deserts — but in the mean time shou'd they escape publick Justice, they must expect the Vengeance of God upon 'em, for wilfully and shamefully neglecting their Duties, for abusing their Places, and for the worst and most impudent of Perjuries, when instead of discouraging Vice they go so far to strengthen and defend it — and besides all this, they'll have the Souls of those unhappy Men to answer for whom they have encouraged to persist in their wickedness by granting 'em as far as they could, impunity in it — and this their own Consciences will tell 'em louder than we, when they themselves come to be Criminals at the Bar of the Almighty — which if they'd in earnest consider, we hope they'd severely repent any such actions, and for the future avoid 'em.

Quest. 10. What shall we think of that Mans Religion who has formerly had his Goods Seiz'd for being at a Dissenters Meeting, and lately had them Seiz'd again for Swearing?

Ans. We won't be so uncharitable to say as some wou'd, that the common Proverb is crost, and here's one will Swear and Lie to — but we must observe first, that there are Knaves of all sides, and then that ten to one the Seizing his Goods formerly for Dissenting, only made him a Hypocrite instead of really Converting him, and from such an one as this we cou'd expect no other.